

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-07 NSC-07 SPC-03 SS-20 RSC-01 PRS-01

CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 SAB-01 DRC-01 EB-11 /075 W

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FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5703

INFO SECDEF WASHDC

JCS WASHDC

CNO WASHDC

CSA WASHDC

S E C R E T Y CAIRO 1247

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: BEXP PFOR EG US

SUBJECT: SUEZ CANAL MINE CLEARANCE

REF STATE 49877

1. AFTER TOUCHING BASE WITH FOREIGN MINISTER'S OFFICE (SIRRI) ON REF SUBJECT, I SENT DCM KORMANN TO CALL ON ENGINEER KASSIM OF SUEZ CANAL AUTHORITY TO REQUEST NEEDED DATA ON MINES PORT SAID HARBOR AND APPROACHES. DCM POINTED OUT THIS INFORMATION REQUIRED QUICKLY AND BEFORE CANAL OPERATIONS COULD PROCEED. KASSIM SAID HE WOULD ACT IMMEDIATELY. HOWEVER, INFORMATION WOULD HAVE TO COME FROM EGYPTIAN NAVY IN ALEXANDRIA AND THAT COULD TAKE SOME TIME.

2. KASSIM REPEATED MASHOUR'S EARLIER REQUEST FOR INFORMATION CONCERNING NUMBERS, REQUIREMENTS AND PROJECTED TIME OF ARRIVAL OF NAVAL PERSONNEL SO THAT ARRANGEMENTS FOR BILLETING AND SUPPORT ACTIVITIES COULD BE COMPLETED. HE STRESSED THAT PORT SAID AND CANAL AREAS ARE WAR ZONE AND FACILITIES THERE LARGELY DESTROYED. EGYPTIAN GOVT WANTS TO DO EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO ASSIST NAVY PERSONNEL, BUT NEEDS SOME LEAD TIME IN VIEW OF CIRCUMSTANCES.

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3 KORMANN AND I STRESSED TO BOTH SIRRI AND KASSIM

IMPORTANCE OF MAKING NO PUBLIC COMMENT ON CANAL CLEARING OPERATION. THEY AGREED, BUT WE MUST FRANKLY RECKON WITH WORD OF THIS LEAKING OUT HERE.

4. AS A RELATED MATTER, THE BRITISH APPEAR TO BE PRESSING STRONGLY HERE FOR A ROLE IN THE MINE CLEARANCE OPERATIONS. ROYAL NAVY SURVEY TEAM IS EXPECTED IN NEXT DAY OR TWO TO STUDY MAGNITUDE OF MINE PROBLEM. BRITS HAVE BEEN TELLING EGYPTIANS ROYAL NAVY HAS CERTAIN MINE CLEARANCE CAPABILITY WHICH US NAVY DOES NOT POSSESS. EGYPTIANS ALSO INDICATE BRITS APPEAR TO BE SUGGESTING WE START AT ONE END OF CANAL AND THEY AT OTHER. HOWEVER, BRIT DCM TOLD KORMANN MARCH 12 THEY WOULD NOT LIKE TO SEE SUCH AN OPERATION SINCE IT WOULD AFFORD UNDESIRABLE COMPETITIVE ASPECT TO SITUATION.

5. FONMIN FAHMY HAS TOLD US EGYPTIANS WOULD LIKE US TO ASSUME OVERALL RESPONSIBILITY FOR MINE CLEARANCE OPERATIONS AND USE BRITS AS WE SEE FIT. WOULD BE HELPFUL TO HAVE DEPT/DOD'S THINKING ON PARAMETERS POSSIBLE BRITISH PARTICIPATION IN MINE CLEARANCE OPERATION FOR USE WITH EGYPTIANS AND BRITS AS NEEDED.

EILTS

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NNN

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